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CHAPTER I.

It would be easy to walk many a time through "Fife and the lands about it" and never once find the little fishing hamlet of Pittencraig. Indeed, it would be singular, if it was found, unless some special hunter directed him to it. For clearly it was never intended that human beings should build houses where these cottages cling together, between sea and sky; a few here and a few there, hidden away in every bend of the rock, where a little ground could be leveled, until the tides, in stormy weather, break with threat and fury on the very doorsteps of the lowest cottages.

Yet as the lofty semi-circle of hills bends inward, the sea follows, and there is a fair harbor, where the fishing boats ride together, while their sails dry in the afternoon sun. Then the hamlet is still, for the men are sleeping off the weariness of their night work, while the children play quietly among the tangle and the women mend or knit the lines for the next fishing. A lonely little spot shut in by sea and land, and yet life is there in all its passionate variety—love and hate, jealousy and avarice, youth with its ideal sorrows and infinite expectations; age, with its memories and regrets, and "sure and certain hope."

The cottages also have their individualities. Although they are much of the same size and pattern, an observing eye would have picked out the little cottage as distinctive and prepossessing. Its outside walls were as white as lime could make them, its small windows brightened with green and white enamel, and the litter of ropes and nets and drying fish which encumbered the majority of the houses were pleasant to the eye. Inside on a little ledge, thirty feet above the shingle, it faced the open sea, and was constantly filled with the confused tones of the sighing waves, and the pulsing, pulsing, tremendous vitality. It had been the home of many generations of Binnies, and the very old and the very



Standing Thus in the Clear Strong Light.

young had usually shared its comforts together, but at the time of my story there remained of the family only the widow of the last proprietor, her son Andrew and her daughter Christina.

Christina was twenty years old and still unmarried—a strange thing in Pittencraig, where early marriage is the rule. Some of the old people, however, had been beautiful, and could find no lack of good enough; others thought she was a selfish, cold-hearted lassie, feared for her cares and labors of a fisher's wife. On this June afternoon the girl had been some hours stretching and mending the pile of nets at her feet, but at length the work was in perfect order, and she threw her arms upward and outward to relieve their weariness and then went to the open door. The sea was calm, but the children were still paddling in the pools and on the cold bladder-wrack and she stepped forward to the edge of the cliff and threw them some wild cerise and nutmeg. The sea stood motionless in the bright sunlight, looking down the shingle toward the pier and the little bay, and the air was full of drowsy tones that rough monotony of songs which sea men sing.

Standing thus in the clear, strong light, her great hair was not to be denied. She was tall and not too slender, and at this moment the set of her head was like that of a thoroughbred when it pricks its ears to listen to the faintest sound of a horn, with long lashes and heavy eyebrows; an open-air complexion, dazzling, even when an abundant tan had been laid on; and a flush of ardent life, opening her wide nostrils and stirring gently the exquisite mold of her throat and bust. The moral expression that gave her face its beauty, pure, strong, compassionate woman; cool-headed, but not cold; capable of vigorous and rapid action, and of a full and free investigation she went back to the cottage and stood in the open doorway, with her head leaning against the lintel. Her mother had begun to prepare the evening meal, and fresh fish was frying over the fire, and the old cakes toasting before it; yet as she saw the girl, she stopped, and watched her daughter, and very soon she gave words to her thoughts.

"Christina, you'll no require to be looking after Andrew, he'll be asleep ere he's ever seen his dinner."

"I know that, mother."

"And if it's Jamie Lauder you're thinking of, let me tell you it's a poor business, to have a fair and an inward down-sinking about that young man."

"Perfect nonsense, mother! There's nothing to fear you about Jamie."

"What good ever came through folk saved from the sea? They bring sorrow back with them, and that's a fact well known."

"What could Andrew do but save the lad?"

"Why was the lad running before such a sea? He should have got into harbor; there was time enough. And if it was Andrew's duty to save him, he should have been to loving him, you may talk that much sense from me."

"What, mother! He hasna said a word of love to me."

"He perfectly changes colors the moment he sees you, and you are just making yourself a speculation to the whole village. Christina, I'm no liking the look o' the thing, and Andrew's no liking it, and if you dinna tak' care o' yourself, you'll be in a burning fever o' first love and beyond all reasoning with."

The girl flushed hotly, came into the house and began to say to her mother, she heard Jamie's steps upon the rocky road, and his voice, clear as a blackbird's, gayly whistling "In the Bay of Biscay O." The cottage was a right, Christy, I'm talking about Jamie Lauder. The lad is just a temptation to you, and you'll need some strength to be kept from temptation, for the best o' us dinna expect strength to resist it."

Christina turned her face to her mother and then left her answer to her mother. He came in at the moment with a little tartan shawl in his hand, which he gallantly threw about the shoulders of Miss Binnie. "I have just bought it from a peddler loon," he said. "It's bonnie and soft, and it sets you well, and I hope you'll please me by wearing it."

His face was so bright, his manner so charming, that it was impossible for Janet Binnie to resist him. "You're a fleecing, flustering lad," she answered, but she stroked and flattered the gay kerchief, while Christina made her observe how bright were the colors of it, and how neatly the soft folds fell around her. Then the door of the inner room opened, and Andrew came sleepily out.

"The fish is burning, and the old cakes, too, for I'm smelling them ben the house," he said, and Janet ran to the fire and hastily turned her herring and cakes. "I'm feared you'll no think much o' your meat tonight," she said, regretfully, "the tea is fairly ruined."

"Never mind the meat, mother," said Andrew. "We dinna live to eat."

"Never mind the meat! What perfect nonsense! There's something wrong with folk that dinna mind their meat."

"Weel, then, you should be so vain o' yourself, mother. You were preening like a peacock when I got out o' you, and the meat taking care o' itself."

"Me vain! Na, na! Naebodie that kens Janet Binnie can Fife, shore vane, I wot weel that I am a frail, miserable creature, with little need o' being vain, either o' myself or my hair. But draw to the table and eat, and I'll warrant the fish will prove better than it's bonnie."

They sat down with a pleasant content that soothed the heart and the laughter, as Jamie Lauder began to tell, and to show, how the peddler had fleeced and dished the fisher wives out of their husbands' money, and how he had come within sight of their fine words, they were that civil to him.

"Du, ay, senselessly civil, na doubt o' it," said Janet. "The peddler ay gives the whole village a fit o' the liberalities. The like o' Jean Robertson spending a crown on a pair o' shoes, no to see, that she'll get from me in the morning."

Then Jamie took a letter from his pocket and showed it to Andrew. "Robert told me it this afternoon," he said, "and, as you may see, it is from the Hendersons o' Glasgow, and they say there will be a berth open for me in one o' their ships. Their boats are good, and their captains good, and there's chances for a fine sailor on that line. I may be a captain myself one of these days," and he laughed so gayly and looked so bravely into the face of such a bold idea that he persuaded every one else to expect it for him.

At these words there was a momentary shadow across the door, and a little lassie slipped in, and when she did so, all put down their cup to welcome her. Her eyes were red, and a tender smile softened her firm mouth, and she put out her hand and took the girl's hand, and she said, "Christina had pushed close to his own."

"You're a sight for sair e'en, Sophy Thraill," said Miss Binnie, but for all that she was a fatherly glance, in which there was much speculation, not unmingled with fear and disapproval, for it was easy to see that she was not at all like him, nor yet like the fisher girls of Pittencraig. Sophy, however, was not responsible for this difference, for she was a girl of a different kind, the care of an aunt, who carried on a dress and bonnet-making business in Largo; and she had turned the little fisher's wife into a girl after her own heart and wishes.

She came frequently, indeed, to visit her own people in Pittencraig, but she had gradually grown to be a stranger to them, and there was no wonder that Miss Binnie asked herself fearfully, "What kind of a wife at all she would be to a fisher's son?" The girl was small and gentle, she had such a lovely face, such fair rippling hair and her gown was of blue muslin, and she had a lace collar round her throat and a ribbon belt round her slender waist. "A bonnie lass for a carriage and pair," thought Janet Binnie, "but whatever will she do with the creel and the nets, no to speak o' the bairns and the housework."

Andrew was too much to love to consider these questions. When he was six years old he had carried Sophy in his arms, and he had never since forgotten that he had paddled on the sands and fished and played and learned their lessons together. She had promised then to be his wife, and he had never since forgotten that he had paddled on the sands and fished and played and learned their lessons together. She had promised then to be his wife, and he had never since forgotten that he had paddled on the sands and fished and played and learned their lessons together.

But she sent the young people out of the house while she redd up the disorder made by the evening meal, though as she wiped her face she went frequently to the little window and looked at the four young things sitting together on the bit of turf which carpeted the ground before the cottage. Andrew, as a privileged legged loon, held Sophy's hand; Christina sat next to her brother and facing Jamie Lauder, so that she saw his face and his kind and his manner softened to the charm of his merry conversation, his snatches of breezy sea song and his clever bits of mimicry. And as Janet waited to and fro, setting her cups and plates in the rack and putting in place the table and chairs, she saw the young people more frequently and the more she was to see the real woman within her and thus got to the bottom of things.

In less than an hour there began to be a movement about the pier, and then Andrew and Christina went to their mother's work, and the girls sat still and watched the men across the level sands, and the boats hurrying out to the fishing grounds. Then they went back to the cottage and found that Miss Binnie had taken her knitting and gone to chat with a crouny who lived higher up the cliff.

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In sweetest sympathy; they were sufficient, and Sophy's thin, restless voice broke the silence, and almost as if by magic, a young lassie, when I got out o' you, and I wasn't happy at all."

"You let on like you were. I should think you would be as feared to act a lie as to tell one."

"I'll be away from Pittencraig tomorrow morn'."

"What for?"

"I have my reasons."

"No doubt you have a 'becaus' of your own, but what will Andrew say? He's no expecting it."

"I dinna care what he says."

"Sophy Thraill."

"Dinna, Andrew Binnie is na the whole o' life to me."

"Whatever is the matter with you?"

"Nothing."

Then there was a pause, and Christina's thoughts flew seaward. In a few minutes, however, Sophy began talking again.

"Do you come often as far as Largo, Christina?" she asked.

"Whiles I take myself that far. You may count me up for the last year; I thought you were even."

"Ay, do you mind on the Law road; a bonnie house, fine and old, with a braw garden and peaches and apples and long feathers o' the grass and gravel?"

"You'll be meaning Braelands? Folks canna miss the house, if they tried to."

"I was wondering if you ever noticed a young man about the place. He is ay dressed for the saddle, or else he is in the saddle, and so, maist sure to have a whip in his hand."

"What are you talking for?"

"I have heard tell o' him, and by what is said, I shouldn't think he was an improving friend for any young girl to have."

"Do you know what you are saying, Sophy?"

"Are you liking him?"

"It wouldn't be hard to do."

"Has he ever been to you?"

"Weel, he's no as bad as a fisher lad. I find him in my way when I'm no thinking; and see here, Christina! I got a letter from him this afternoon. A real love letter. Such bonnie words! They are like poetry. They are bonnie as singing."

"Why would I do that?"

"You are a false, little cutty, Sophy Thraill. I would tell Andrew myself, but I'm loth to hurt his true heart."

"I'll be leaving Archie Braelands alone, or I'll ken the reason why."

"Gude preserve us! What a blazing pair for a pair o' lasses! Can't a lassie give a bit o' sessions aent it?" And she rose and went to her room.

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COWBOYS AT WORK

Hamlin Garland Gives His Impressions of a Round-Up.

THE CRUELTY OF BRANDING

Some Stirring Encounters Between Man and Beast.

WITH THE COW BOSS

(Copyright, 1895, by Bacheller, Johnson & Bacheller.)

SALEDA, August 4, 1895.

A CRIPPLE CREEK mining camp I heard of a round-up on on Wilson creek, and saddling a horse I left the trail," as they say on the range.

Leaving the camp, I descended rapidly along a fine trail running among aspens and scattered pines, with hills on each side of the road.

The gulch became a canon with beautiful deep red cliffs rising perpendicularly on either side.

At an altitude of about 8,000 feet I came out upon the floor of a grassy valley with crested buttes standing about like fortresses. The lower hills were delicately modelled with curves delicious as the cheeks of a peach. Behind me the Pine's Peak range lifted to the sky, which was gray with rain.

I passed by scattered ranches, desolate and squalid, among the splendid hills. Red-ragged women showed their worn faces at the windows and half-wild children peered from the doors.

At 7,000 feet I came upon a finer, water-bathed, which was speckled with water-baths, which was speckled with water-baths, which was speckled with water-baths.

Here my guide had a cabin, and I stayed all night with him and his partner. The cattle were "range cattle," as they are called, and were wild and fierce-looking, especially the bulls—great, lithe, tiger-like animals.

I suppose these are all volunteer riders—like an old-fashioned hunter. The men are expected to do his share. Each man drives the cattle in his range no matter whose they are, and then we put out the cattle that belong to the range where the round-up is and take the others into their own range.

We were out since the first week of June. We'll be out till August 7, probably. The fall round-up isn't quite so long.

The branding was soon over and then the cattle began to move. The next round-up lay over a former ridge, and I rode behind the troupe with the boss. I saw a characteristic scene. Topping up the horses, the men rode on the back of the wagon gave out, and four of the cowboys hitched their lariats to the pole and jerked the wagon up the gulch "like a bat out of hell." The men rode on the back of the wagon.

We rose the snow-covered mountains came into view again, and far to the west, Pike's Peak rose like a pink moon with silver bands. All about were tumbled granite ridges and glorious grassy swells.

Just at sunset we wound down a wide, deliciously green valley where no mark of man was set, save in the trail. In the center of the valley a drove of cattle was feeding. Beyond, swift riders were pushing before them the herd of saddle horses. A deep cut of a deep dell a platform of other riders was moving to meet us. It was all beautiful, unbroken, impressive.

The horsemen drew up under a row of cotton wood trees and waited our approach. The wagon stopped amid shouts, and the men dismounted. The horsemen flung saddlebags and ropes and the cowboys ready lariats galloped away for logs of dry wood. Hammers were heard driving but the men stopped to saw the logs. Revolvers were drawn and the men were ready to shoot into place and in ten minutes water was on the fire for coffee.

The horse-ranger and his detail rounded up the horses and dismounted. With a whoop and whistle over the hill upon mesa. It had in it the movement, the accuracy, the readiness of a cavalry camp.

Eating was no business with these centaurs. It had the certainty and savagery of a farm threshing crew. There plucked the horses and the cups or butter knives. Some ate standing, and in place on rolls of bedding. Every man helped himself.

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